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THE

COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED

Citizens district of Columbia,

SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

UNITED STATES.

setteet of July bear

AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

WASHINGTON CITY:

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To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The anomalous condition of affairs in the District of Columbia, affecting most injuriously the fortunes and happiness of its citizens, has induced a voluntary association of tax-payers, for the purpose of soliciting from the Congress of the United States such remedial and beneficial legislation as may be just and expedient. They appeal to *Congress*, because the Federal Constitution has invested that body with supreme and exclusive legislative power in this District—with the same absolute control and authority as it exercises over the National forts, arsenals, magazines, and navy-yards—and it is, therefore, to the beneficent exercise of this plenary authority *alone*, that they can look for relief.

This association of tax-payers, known as "The Committee of 100," initiated their proceedings by the appointment of various sub-committees, for the purpose of obtaining such special and reliable information in the several departments of local administration as will furnish a proper basis and guide for the relief and legislation which they ask of Congress. These committees, composed of citizens familiar with the operations of the departments severally assigned to them, have reported; and we are charged by the association with the duty of laying before Congress a condensed statement of the material facts contained in these reports, together with such additional information as we may be able to present.

IMPROVEMENTS OF STREETS, &C.

The present site of the city of Washington, embracing an area of 7,161 acres, was, on 29th June, 1791, conveyed by Daniel Carroll and others to the United States, in *trust*, "to be laid out for a federal city, with such streets, squares, and parcels, and lots as the President of the United States, for the time being, shall approve;" and on the further *trust*, that *all the streets*, together with such squares, parcels, and

THE COMMENTERS

lots as the President should select and reserve for public use, should be held forever, "for the use of the United States," the Government paying for the lands so reserved at the rate of £25 (\$66.66) per acre; and the residue of lots to be fairly and equally divided between the United States and the grantors.

The lands reserved by President Washington under this grant aggregate 541 acres; and thus the United States, for the consideration of \$36,000, acquired title to 5,653 acres, or nearly four fifths of the entire area of the city, viz:

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Area of streets, - - - - - - 3,604 acres.

" reservations, - - - - 541 "

" lots donated, - - - - 1,508 "

Total, - - - - - - - 5,653 "
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It was further provided in these deeds, that the moiety of lots donated to the Government should be sold, and that the proceeds, after payment to the proprietors of the \$36,000 due for the reservations, should be held by the United States as a "grant of money," to be applied toward the erection of the public buildings, &c, under the act of Congress of 16th July, 1790, for establishing the permanent seat of Government; and it appears that the fund derived from this gift, notwith-standing its improvident management, paid, not only the \$36,000 due the proprietors, but also the cost of erecting the public buildings prepared for the reception of the Government in 1800, and of their restoration after destruction by the British in the war of 1812.

It is a fact, then, that the public buildings originally provided for the use of the Government, and the 541 acres of public reservations, now worth from \$25,000,000 to \$30,000,000, together with all the streets and avenues of the city, were a *free gift* to the United States from the original proprietors. And the title of the Government, as ratified by the State of Maryland, and confirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States, is so complete and absolute, that Congress may at any time close and occupy, and even alienate, any of

the streets, and the owners of lots affected thereby be without redress. Even the moiety of lots which fell to the proprietors, in the division of the residue above referred to, was reconveyed to them, subject to such regulations as might be prescribed by the President in regard, not only to the use and improvement of the streets, but also to the "materials and manner" of the buildings to be erected thereon. And the control of private property thus reserved was freely exercised by the Government in the early period of the city's history.

The plan of the city, as approved by Washington, is on a scale of unprecedented magnificence; with streets, 90 to 160 feet in width, covering more than half its area; and, at the period of its foundation, and for many years thereafter, it was without population, or resources of any kind; the improvement of its streets, and the building of sewers, bridges, &c., being the sole and exclusive care of the Government and its agents. It was not until 1812, that the Corporation of Wash ington and the Levy Court of the County were *authorized* to open and improve the streets and roads.

From the facts here stated, it is apparent that Washington was projected by its founders for a purely national city, to be governed and improved exclusively by Congress, without re gard, in a legal sense, to the voice or wishes of its citizens. And, although the appropriations by Congress, for general improvements in this District, have never been at all commensurate with the princely grant under which the Government now holds nearly a hundred millions of real estate, or with the grand design and expectations of the founders of the Republic and of its capital, as manifested by their early acts, they have at all times admitted the national obligations and responsibilties in this regard.

See Report of Senator Southard, 2d Feb., 1835.

- " of Senator Brown, 15th May, 1858.
- " of House Committee on D. of C., 13th May, 1872.
- " House Committee on Judiciary, 1st June, 1874.

See Report Joint Committee of Two Houses, 7th Dec., 1874.

" Joint Committee of Two Houses, 1876.

And these various expressions by Congressional Committees have been zealously seconded in many of the Executive messages to Congress.

A careful inquiry into the comparative expenditures by the local and federal Governments, for streets, sewers, and other improvements, for the common benefit, shows, that while the appropriations by Congress for these objects, up to the present, do not exceed \$6,000,000, the District Government has expended for the same purposes not less than \$35,000,000; which sum, is represented by a debt of about \$23,000,000, and the balance of \$12,000,000 has been furnished, in cash, by the tax-payers of the District.

It further appears, that these expenditures by the local Government, except \$9,000,000, expended prior to 1871, were made, and \$15,000,000 of this oppressive debt contracted, by agents of the United States, over whom the citizens of the District had no control whatever, and for whose acts, therefore, they are in no manner responsible.

The federal property, equally with that of private owners, has shared the *general* benefit of these expenditures; but, in addition to this, a large portion thereof has been expended in front of the various public reservations: by a single improvement made recently by the District Government, viz, filling the canal, and improving B street, from Seventeenth street eastwardly, more than fifty acres of land, valued at \$2,500,000, have been reclaimed and added to the Government Park fronting thereon. It is claimed that the \$6,000,000 of federal expenditures has not, by several millions, reimbursed the local Government for improvements, by which the public property has been *specially* benefited.

As in the beginning, the Federal City was without population or resources to which its founders could look for its development and improvement, so also, at the present time, it is wholly without means, either of wealth or industry, to

meet the enormous outlays, necessitated by the magnificence of its plan. It has no business, except what is based on the wants of its citizens and of the Government service; one half of its property, and the best half, is owned by the United States, and pays no taxes; and the other half is now mortgaged for more than one fourth of its value by a debt contracted in exhausting and paralyzing efforts to make it what its patriotic founders designed it to be—a National Capital, worthy of the name it bears. Several millions of dollars are now required to renew its decayed and almost impassable streets. Where shall its already over-burdened tax-payers look for aid and relief, except to the Congress of the United States.

From the facts here presented, the inference is plain that the United States and our tax-paying citizens, as partners or tenants-in-common in this District, are bound, respectively, to contribute a just and equal share of the funds necessary to develop and improve the common property; and that the United States, having exclusive and absolute title to the streets and avenues of the city, as well as to the public grounds and buildings, (which alone give value to the property of citizens,) and being clothed by the Constitution with plenary and exclusive power of control and administration, the Government is under special obligations to turnish its share.

It is equally clear, that the tax-payers of the District have already and uniformly contributed more them their equal share of these improvements. Will not the Government, with equal fidelity to its high trusts, discharge the obligations required alike by its constitutional relations to the District, and by justice to its citizens?

TAXATION.

The facts before us on this important subject are briefly these:

The assessment of the taxable property of the District, for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1878, is—

For real estate	\$97,672,228
For personal property	9,052,335
Total	\$106,724,563

The value of Federal property, according to assessment made in 1873, is, for real estate alone, \$95,986,156.

This assessment of real estate owned by individuals is believed by the assessors to be at least twenty per cent. more than its actual present value; and when this fact, in connection with the enormous levies of special taxes, is considered, it may be confidently asserted that the burden of taxation imposed on the private property of this District is greater than that borne by any other community in the United States, while its resources, in proportion to population, are less. For it must be borne in mind that the rate of taxation, (\$1.50 on the \$100) moderate as it may seem, is levied on less than one half of the real estate of the District, which is thus made to bear the burden of the whole.

The people of this District have also, since 1863, paid into the Treasury of the United States, under the internal revenue law, \$4,695,119, or more than has been paid by all the other territories combined—more than has been paid by the States of Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, or Oregon. This single item of Federal taxation levied on the industries of our citizens has nearly reimbursed the Government for all of its appropriations for improvements in the District.

The *effects* of this excessive taxation demonstrate that we do not exaggerate the case.

do not exaggerate the case.	
The arrears of general taxes for 1875, 1876, and	
1877, amount to the sum of	\$990,253
Arrears of personal taxes for 1877	56,425
	\$1,046,678
Arrears of special taxes	2,122,866
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It is estimated that more than two fifths of the entire real estate belonging to citizens is now held by the District of Columbia, under purchases at tax sales. A penalty of two per cent. per month is running against all property in arrears for general taxes; and the tax-lien certificates, issued for arrears of special taxes, (a large amount of which are now held by banks,) bear interest at the rate of ten per cent. per annum. And if we add to all this the expense of tax sales, and of judicial proceedings against delinquents, it is apparent that, without speedy relief, the District Government will soon be possessed of more than half of the property of its citizens.

For confirmation of this statement, we refer to the able report of the Hon A. H. Buckner, Chairman of House Committee on the District of Columbia, made 1st July, 1876.

The District Assessors express the opinion that the tax of \$1.50 on the \$100, levied under act of the last Congress on invested funds, must have a disastrous effect on the revenues of the District, by expelling a large amount of wealth which would otherwise find a home here, and thus depreciating the value of real estate and other taxable property.

It takes from holders of bonds, mortgages, &c., one fourth of their income to pay their taxes, and thus offers a strong temptation to fraud and perjury. The experience here, as it has been in other places, demonstrates that a high tax on this class of property is most unequal in its operation, as well as impolitic and demoralizing.

FINANCE AND DEBT.

The Commissioners of the District estimate that an annual revenue of \$3,000,000 is required to meet the various expenses of local administration, interest on debt, sinking fund, and for improvements and repairs of streets, &c., and that moderate levies on the taxable property of the District may confidently be relied on to furnish one half of this sum, or \$1,500,000.

The debt of the District may be briefly stated as follows:

Old funded debt, authorized by Congress	\$8,379,691 96
Fifty-year bonds, 3.65, guaranteed by Congress	13,743,250 00
Floating debt	1,014,000 00
Total	\$23,136,941 96

CHARITIES AND PENAL INSTITUTIONS.

From the latest reports made by the various charitable and benevolent institutions in the District which receive aid from Congress, it appears that fifty-eight per cent. of the beneficiaries are non-residents; and from the report of Commissioner Luby, for the present year, we take these figures relating to the District Almshouse and Workhouse, viz:

Of 428 paupers admitted to the Almshouse, but 69 were natives of the District.

Of 1,695 offenders committed to the Workhouse, only 455 were natives of the District.

Public Schools.

Official reports show that while the rate of taxation in this District, for the support of Public Schools, is nearly double that in most of the large cities of the Union, the means of education are wholly inadequate to the wants of our population. We have expended for this object, in the last six years, nearly \$2,400,000, and yet 104 of our schools, representing 6,240 scholars, are compelled to occupy rented rooms, wholly unfitted for the purpose, and menacing to the health of our children. The sum of \$400,000 is required to supply this deficiency of school buildings, and an additional appropriation of \$75,000 is needed to keep our schools in operation to the close of the present school-year.

While all the Territories, and most of the States of the Union have received from Congress munificent grants of the public lands, in aid of education, not an acre has been granted to the District of Columbia—the Nation's Capital—and the

appropriations of money by Congress for this object are insignificant.

This injustice to the District seems the greater, when we consider the fact that one third of our school revenue is devoted to the education of colored children, invited here from the surrounding States by recent action of Congress, and whose parents as a rule pay no taxes; and that 30 per cent. of the white pupils in our schools are the children of persons connected with the public service, and who, for the most part, are mere sojourners and non-taxpayers. Thus, while the States furnish 60 per cent. of the beneficiaries of our schools, they throw the entire burden of their support on the 40 per cent. of tax-paying citizens. It is more than they can bear.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

The efficiency of this branch of local administration, so necessary for the protection of public as well as private property, is greatly impaired by reason of insufficient appropriations. The sum of \$100,000 is now required to supply necessary apparatus, and an increased annual appropriation of \$30,000 is needed to maintain a proper standard of efficiency. The local government is wholly unable to furnish these additional sums.

POLICE.

Sections 366, 367, 368, of the Revised Statutes, applicable to the District of Columbia, provide for the payment by the United States of two thirds of the expense of maintaining the police department of the District. But the last Congress, without changing this rule of apportionment, appropriated but \$150,000, instead of \$205,270, the amount required under the ratio established by law, and which had theretofore been appropriated. A deficiency of \$55,270 was thus created, and the District Commissioners being without the means to supply this deficiency, the result has been, and must continue to be, a gradual diminution, instead of a gradual increase, of the

force, as required by the growth of population and the wants of the service. The Government, equally with the citizens of the District, is benefited by the general patrol service of the force; and the details for special service which it requires employ continuously at least one third of the entire force. The greater part of arrests are for violations of the United States laws, and the revenue derived from fines goes directly into the federal treasury. There seems, therefore, to be no sufficient reason for the reduced appropriation of last year.

LIGHT.

Nearly the entire expense of lighting the cities of Washington and Georgetown, including lamps on streets around the public grounds and buildings, is paid by the District Government. The United States pays for no lamps, except those located on the public reservations. About \$163,000 were expended for light during the past year, and of this sum the Government paid but \$6,312.40.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HARBOR IMPROVEMENT.

To no city in the Union is a well-regulated sanitary system more important than to this capital of the nation. Located, like most tide-water cities, in a malarial region, and the resort of a large transient population, from all sections of a vast and highly diversified country, with every variety of climate, Washington is peculiarly liable to epidemic visitations. And the fact that it is also the official residence of the chief functionaries of the Federal Government,—Executive, Legislative, and Judicial,—and of a large number of public employees of all grades, renders its sanitary condition an important factor for maintaining the efficiency of the public service.

Recognizing the force of these considerations, Congress has already admitted its obligations in the premises, by justly and wisely providing, in part, for the support of the present Board of Health.

But there is at our doors an evil that no such organization can reach, and which, if not arrested, may become a prolific source of disease and death. The marshes which skirt the entire front of our city, are the growth of years of neglect of the commercial and sanitary interests of the nation's capital. The remedy is to be found only in a judicious plan of harbor improvement, by which the health and commerce of the city will be alike promoted. Congress has layished millions on the rivers and harbors of the country, in localities, too, whose claims to national consideration are insignificant as compared with Washington; while comparatively nothing has been done for the harbor of its capital, or for the navigation of a great river, which has capacity to float its navy and to sustain a vast marine commerce. Happily, too, in this case, the Government being owner, under the munificent grant before alluded to, of nearly the entire water front of the city, the cost of such an improvement, though large, would be more than reimbursed by the value of several hundred acres of land which would thereby be reclaimed and added to adjacent parks, and to the Arsenal and Navy Yard Reservations.

LEGISLATION.

Having now, in obedience to our instructions, briefly presented such facts and considerations as affect the relations and duties of the Government to the District of Columbia, we take the liberty of herewith placing before Congress the form of a bill, which, if speedily enacted into law, will be gratefully acknowledged by our fellow citizens, and relieve them, in part at least, of a burden which they can no longer carry. We venture to affirm, in conclusion, that the municipal resources of no city in the land, however rich and great it may be, are equal to the task of developing and maintaining its improvements on the scale of magnificence which its founders have given to the plan of this capital of a great nation. Surely the least that we can ask is, that Congress will share with us the burden of this common heritage.

Will they not yield us this measure of justice? This capital is the property of the nation; will not the nation aid in taking care of its own?

Respectfully submitted,

J. M. Wilson, W. W. CORCORAN, Joseph Casey, S. H. KAUFFMAN, WM. DIXON, C. F. Peck, Joseph Shillington, A. Y. P. GARNETT, S. V. NILES, L. A. Gobright, M. W. GALT, Josiah Dent. W. S. Cox, A. T. BRITTON, C. B. CHURCH, THOS. P. MORGAN. B. G. LOVEJOY, WM. STICKNEY. W. H. CLAGETT, Lewis J. Davis.

Committee.

Washington, D. C., November 21, 1877

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the proper executive authorities of the District of Columbia shall, in accordance with existing laws, estimate annually and report through the Secretary of the Treasury, at the beginning of each session, to Congress, the amount necessary to defray the expenses and pay the accruing indebtedness of the Government of the District of Columbia for the next fiscal year; and to the extent to which the said estimates shall be approved, Congress shall appropriate the amount of fifty per centum thereof, and the remaining fifty per centum thereof shall be levied upon the property in said District, other than the property of the United States and of the District of Columbia, and shall be collected in the manner provided by law for the collection of taxes in said District.

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